

# 6

## URBAN DESIGN

The urban design concept for the Eisenhower East Plan is an exciting vision for growth and development for the next 20 years. The Plan guides future development to produce a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood where Alexandria residents may live, work, shop, or simply enjoy green parks and other public places.

The urban design elements consists of:

- An urban street network
- A system of parks, plazas and open spaces
- A clear organization of building heights and massing
- Architectural design principles
- Street Design guidelines

### **STREETS AND STREET NETWORK**

The new Plan is an interconnected network of streets of various types woven together with a variety of public spaces. These new streets offer a sense of spatial enclosure and participate with the architectural character of the area to make new public places. Unlike suburban areas where buildings float in a “sea” of asphalt, buildings in Eisenhower East define the “street wall” by their placement along lot “build-to” lines and add definition and activity to the streets.

An interconnected framework of parks and squares are all joined together by a network of tree-lined



Figure 6-1 Eisenhower Avenue as the Spine of the New Street Network

streets in a hierarchy of street types, defined by use and size. This street network provides the flexibility of movement for pedestrians and automobiles alike while defining locations for new development within the plan.

The street system is based upon the historic 66-foot-wide right-of-way of Old Town Alexandria with provisions for Eisenhower Avenue to be developed into a larger urban boulevard. Street design principles are:

- Eisenhower Avenue is the spine of the new district, running from the gateway at Holland Lane westward along the southern edge of the Carlyle development and through the Eisenhower Avenue Metro station to the west. East of the Metro station, Eisenhower Avenue

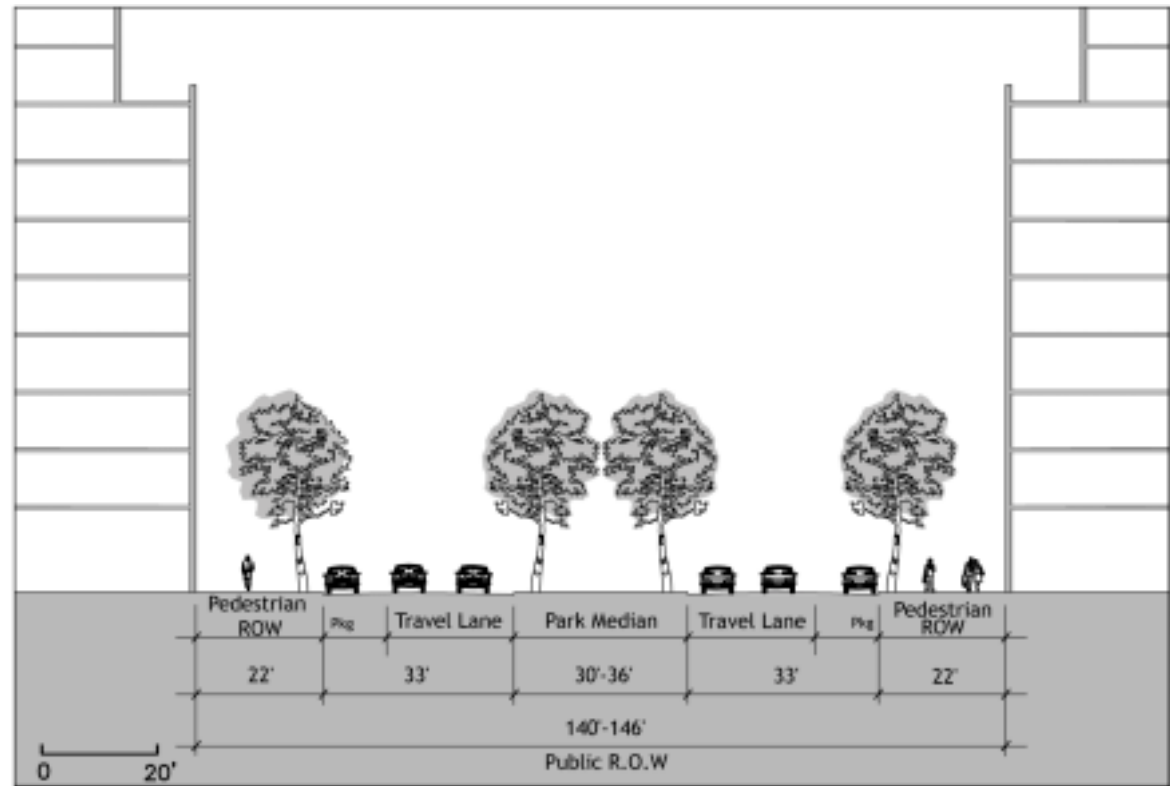


Figure 6-2 Eisenhower Avenue Street Section



Figure 6-3 Eisenhower Avenue with Park Median

will transform from a back service street to a tree-lined boulevard. A 30- to 36-foot-wide tree-lined center median organizes the eastern end of the avenue while at the western side the street narrows to pass under the Metro platform and provide a narrower street section at the new town center. Three travel lanes are accommodated in each direction with the curb lane dedicated to parking in off peak hours. (See Figures 6-2 and 6-3.)

- Retail development will be located along Eisenhower Avenue at the Metro station area and will complement the entertainment center at the Hoffman Town Center.
- Street trees spaced at approximate 30-foot intervals in a six-foot-wide planting strip run the length of Eisenhower from east to west. These trees not only help define the grand boulevard of Eisenhower Avenue, but they will also help to provide shade in the hot summer months as well as protection for the pedestrian from adjacent traffic.
- In retail areas, trees are planted in tree wells with the majority of the area dedicated to active sidewalk use. Along Eisenhower Avenue, the tree well is six feet wide with the balance dedicated to a 16-foot wide sidewalk. On side streets with ground level retail is a six-foot wide tree well with an eight-foot wide sidewalk.

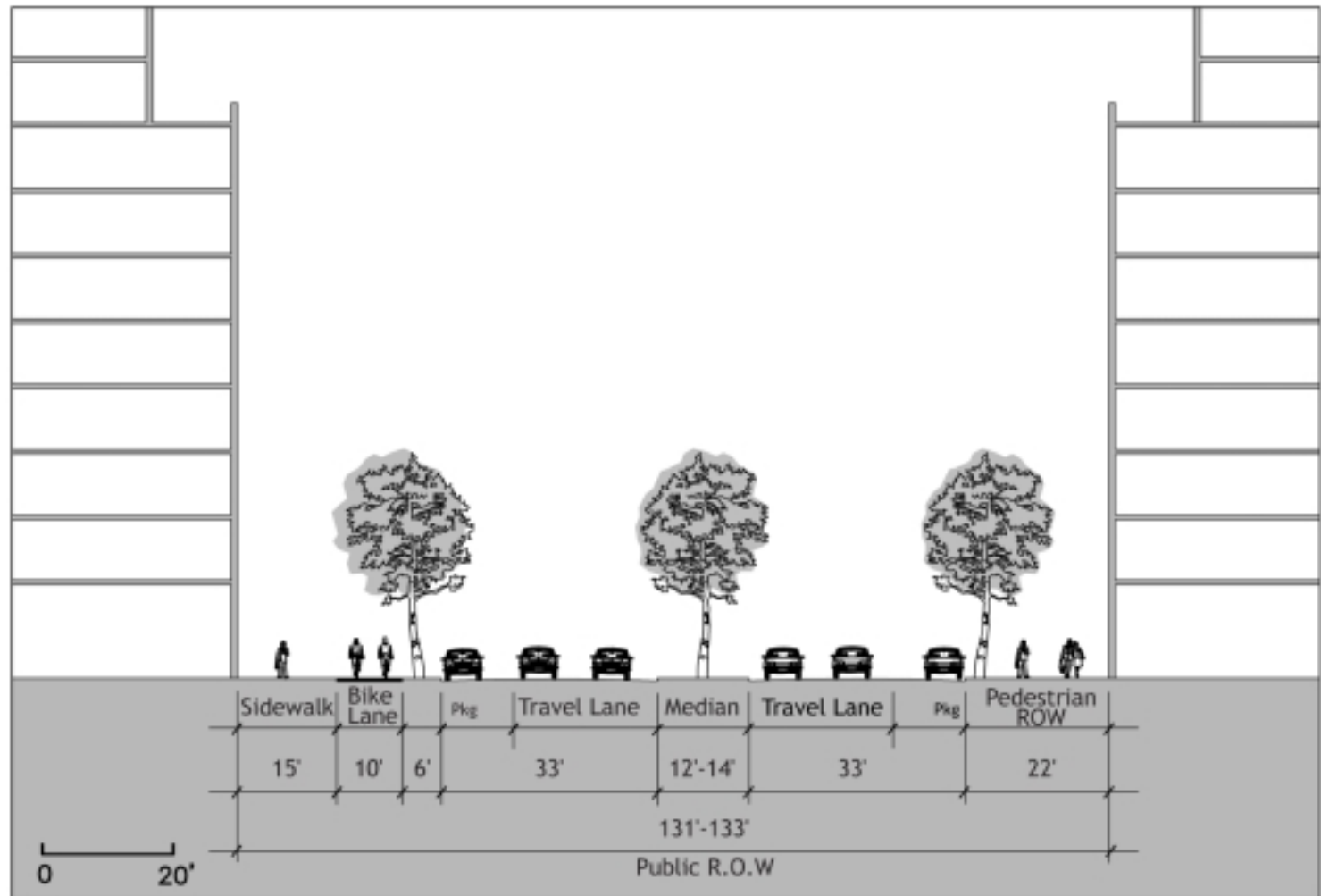


Figure 6-4 Street Section of Eisenhower Avenue with Bike Lanes

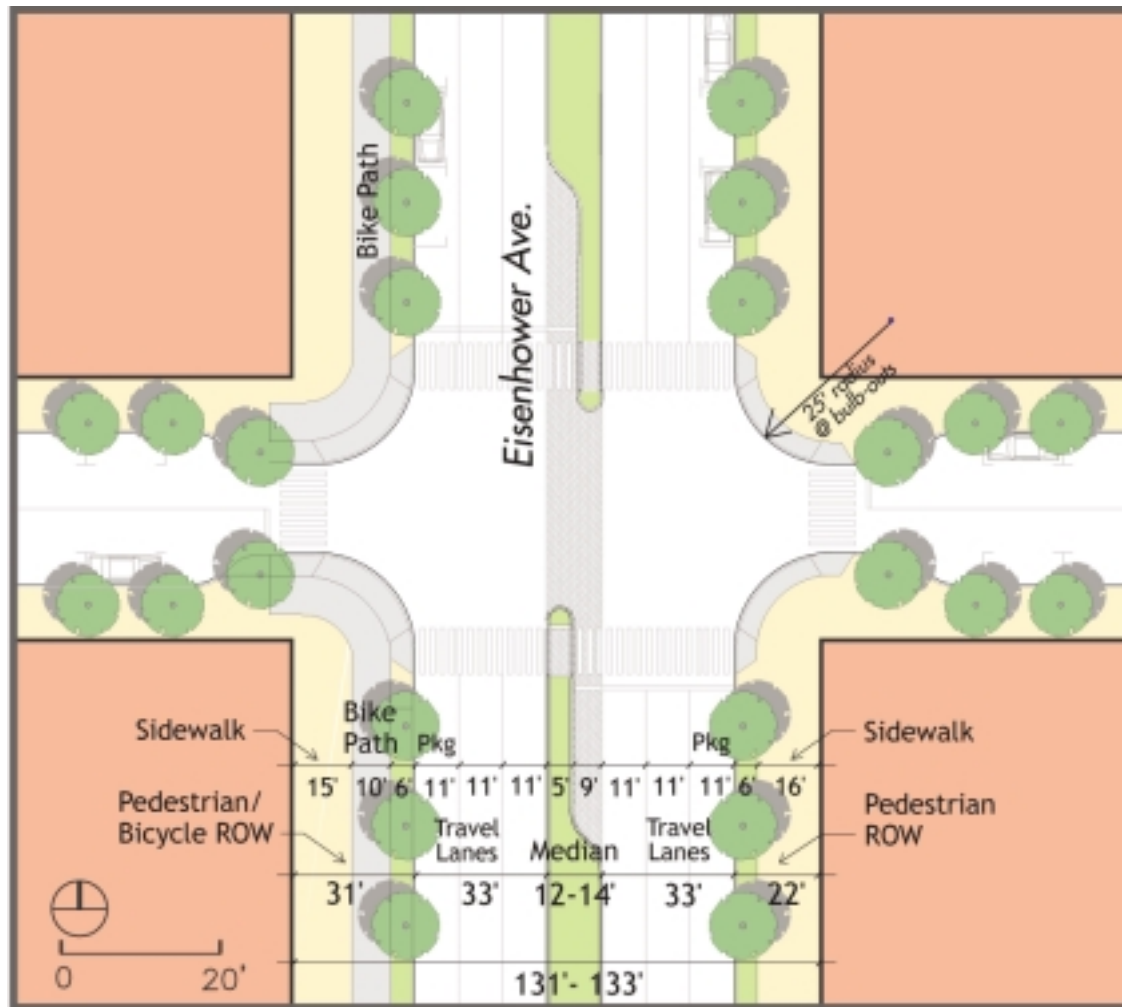


Figure 6-5 Eisenhower Avenue with Bike Lanes

- On streets without active retail at the ground level, there is a continuous six-foot wide planting strip.
- Eisenhower Avenue will also accommodate a ten-foot-wide bike lane along its southern side, running from the bridge at Telegraph Road to the community park beginning just west of the Mill Road intersection. (See Figures 6-4 and 6-5.) The bike lane will then turn into the park and run along the length of the park.

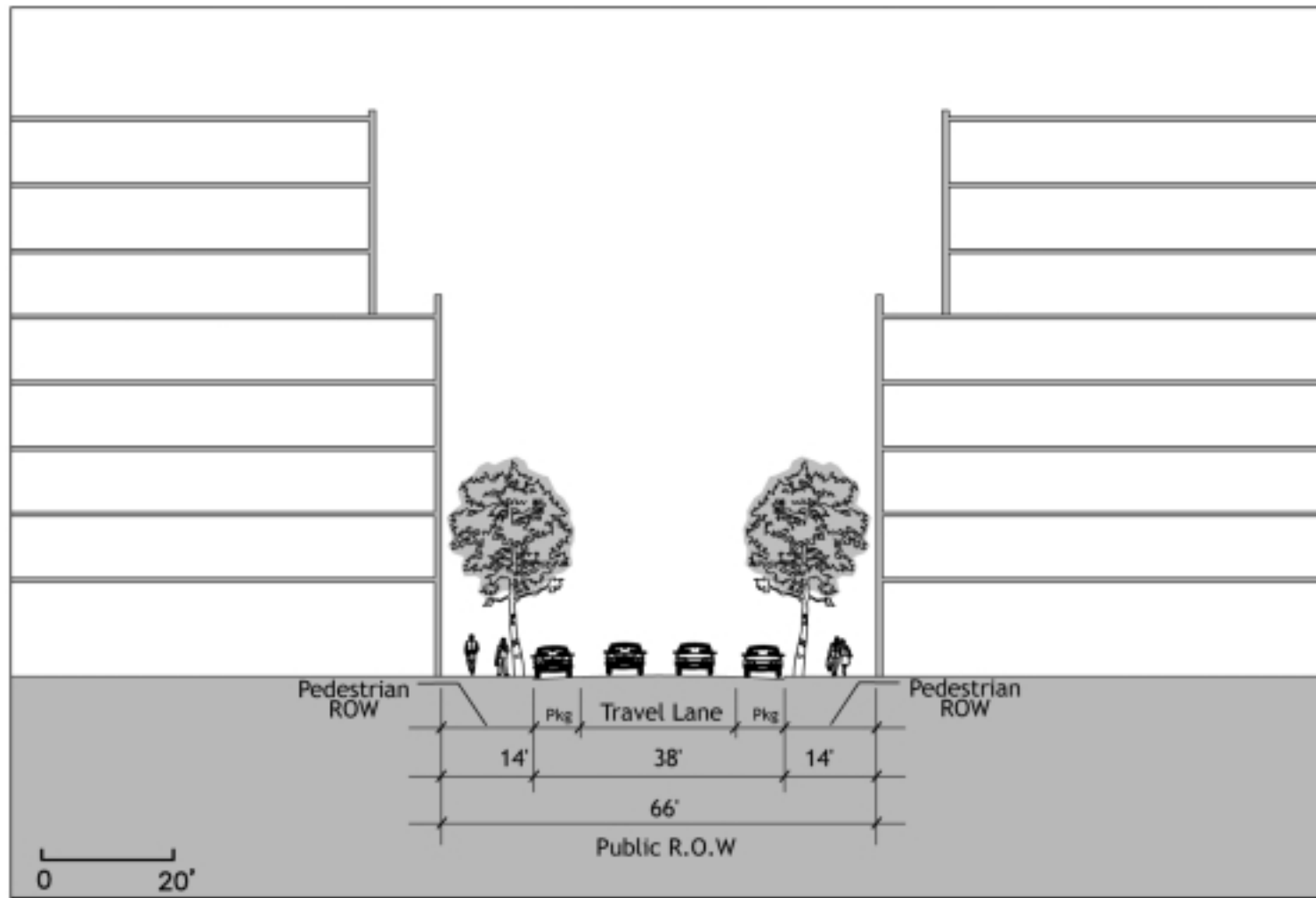


Figure 6-6 Typical Street Section

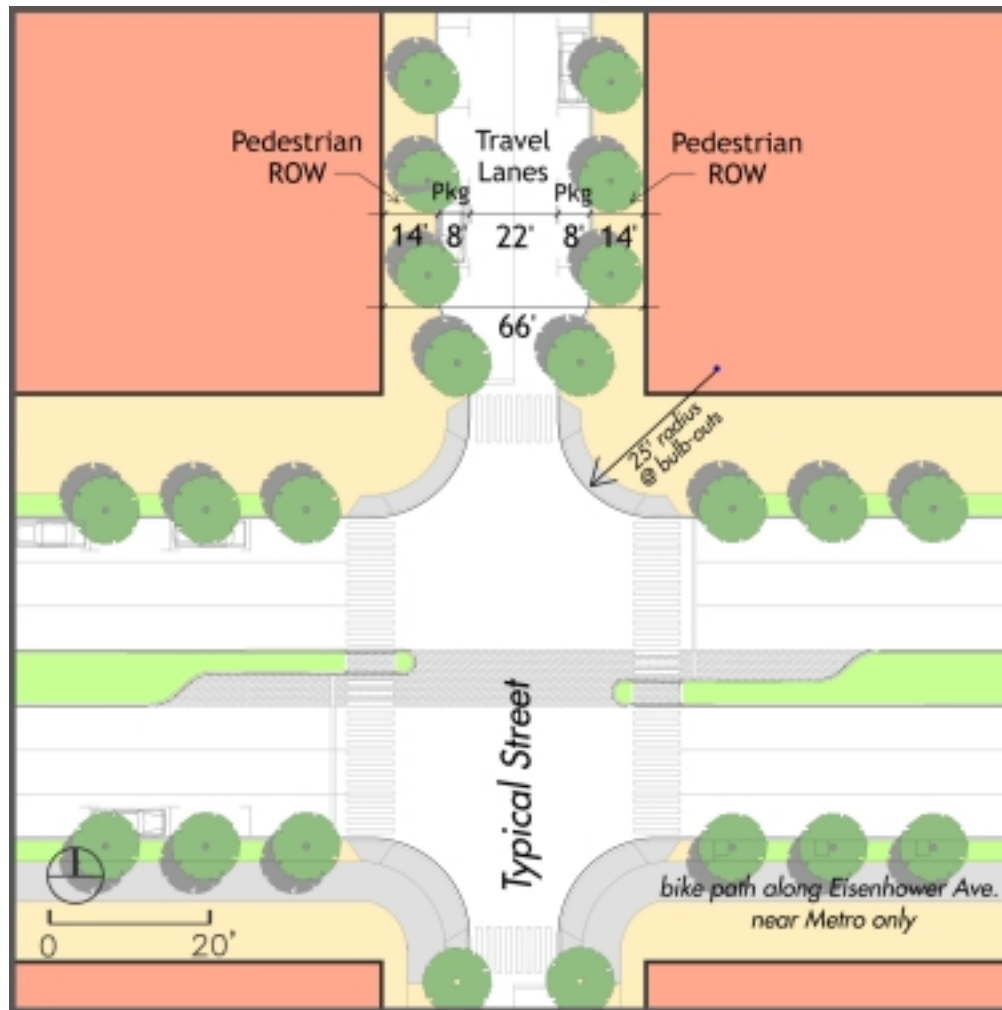


Figure 6-7 Typical Street

- Eisenhower Avenue is the main spine through the district and the widest street. Other streets offer a different character and experience, from such neighborhood streets as John Carlyle Street with its mixed-uses to Park Drive in the Carlyle South neighborhood. The typical 66-foot-wide public right-of-way for streets consists of two 11-foot travel lanes and an eight-foot-wide parking lane on each side. Again, each of these streets is comprised of a six-foot-wide well or strip for trees and a sidewalk zone of eight feet that can be adjusted for increased planting areas per location.
- At the eastern end of the Plan in the South Carlyle area, the Park Drive defines the edge of the built area and offers sweeping views of new parkland to the south. This street is also at the traditional 66-foot width, although the

park borders one side.

- A hierarchy of streets has been developed to maintain a high-quality street environment and offer a variety of streets—from the most important to those streets serving garages and parking access.
- o “A” Streets are primary streets and the main streets of the neighborhood. They set the tone for the character of the community and are most restrictive in terms of use and appearance. This category includes streets such as Eisenhower Avenue and Swamp Fox Lane. (See Figure 6-8 for “A” Streets.)

Key Guidelines:

- Buildings shall front the street;
- Active uses shall be located on all street frontage;
- Parking shall be screened with active uses to at least 30 feet in depth;
- The highest quality of architectural facade treatment shall be used;
- No curb cuts or service alleys shall be in view;
- Main building entries shall be located along frontage.

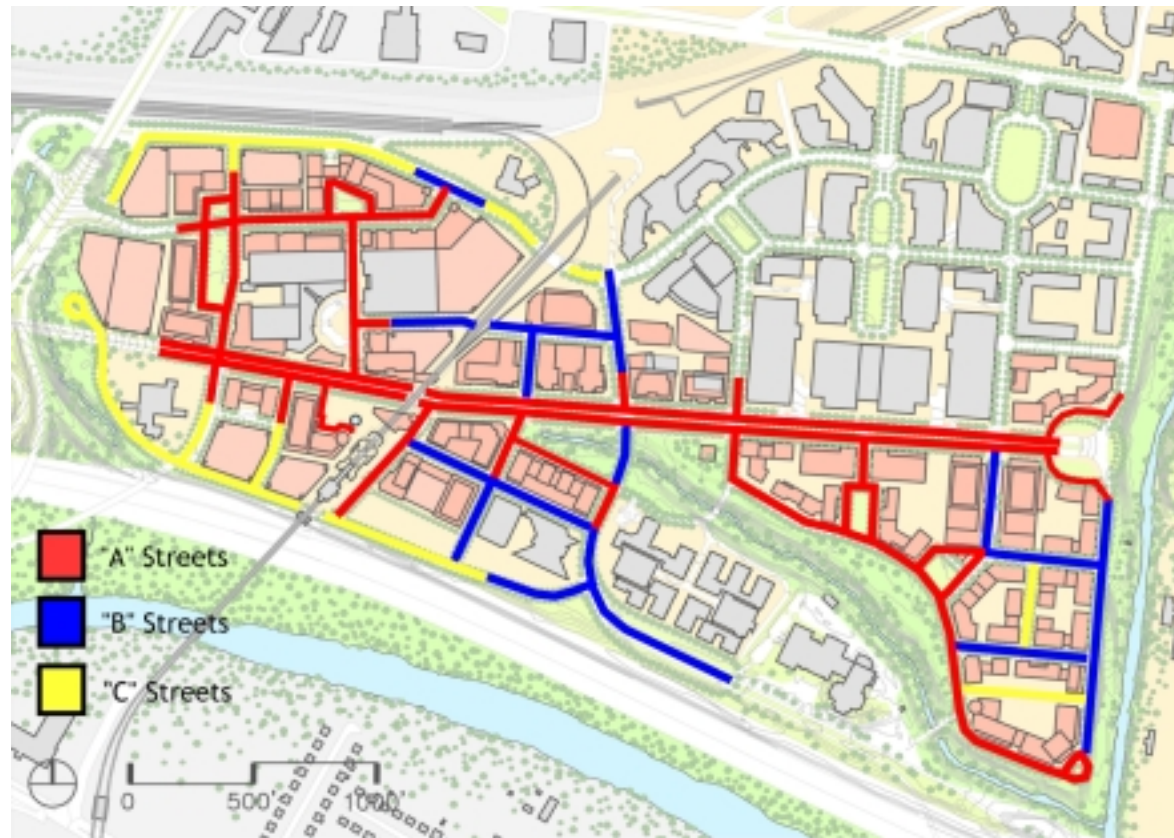


Figure 6-8 “A,B, and C” Streets



An example of an “A street”, grand boulevard with a park median

- o “B” Streets are the secondary streets of the neighborhood. They serve both the pedestrian and the automobile by providing options of access through the neighborhood. While not as restrictive as “A” streets, they restrict some uses. Streets in the category include Mill Road John Carlyle, and Holland Lane. (See Figure 6-8 for “B” Streets.)

#### Key Guidelines:

- Buildings shall front the street;
- Active uses shall be located on all street frontage;
- One curb cut per block shall not be exceeded on both sides of the street;
- Main building entries shall be

located along frontage unless adjacent to a higher-category street;

- Parking may come to the building facade above the ground floor;
  - Parking structures shall be architecturally treated to be in harmony with the overall building design;
  - A high quality of architectural façade treatment shall be used.
- o “C” Streets provide a means of access to service entries and parking structures as well as access through the neighborhood. They are the least public in nature of the streets and less restrictive in intent. “C” streets include parts of Mill Road and Southern Street. (See Figure 6-8 for “C” Streets.)

#### Key Guidelines:

- Parking may come to the building facade and be located on the ground floor;
- Parking structures facades shall be architecturally treated to be in harmony with the overall building design;
- Curb cuts, alley, and parking garage entrances shall be located on “C” streets.

## PUBLIC PLACES

Public spaces are varied and occur throughout the new Eisenhower East Plan. The most important public places are the beautiful and varied streets that unify the Plan from north to south and from east to west, and the system of public parks and plazas located throughout the plan.

Many of the new parks and plazas in the Plan could also serve as locations to recall the history of the site with markers based on local themes, helping the city to remember its past.

The plan encourages incorporating interpretations of early history in the detailed design of park and plaza spaces.

The centerpiece of the whole plan is the new Community Park, centered on the stream valley or



An example of an active public open space

RPA and extending from one block east of the Metro station, across Mill Road to areas east, and turning north, parallel to Holland Drive. The park, a little more than 20 acres, combines a naturalistic setting for the recovered stream valley with large expanses of play fields, serving both active and passive uses.

This park and its central space, The Meadow, provides the city with much needed new parkland and includes paths, open spaces, and a new recreational bike trail connected to the existing bike trail along Eisenhower Avenue to the west.

Other public places include (See Figures 4-15 and 4-16 for the specific locations.):

- The new Eisenhower Station Square is the heart of the new neighborhood at the station area. The plaza aligns visually with Swamp Fox Road and terminates the view from the north with a new fountain and the relocated statue of General Eisenhower. It is a “hardscape” plaza with paved surfaces throughout, serving the high volume of pedestrian activity. To the west of the station is the pedestrian side of the plaza, facing the location of outdoor restaurants, stores, and activities such as lunchtime concerts. To the east are loading and waiting areas for DASH buses as well as waiting areas for taxis and vanpool vehicles. Eisenhower Station plaza is also convenient to extensive parking resources within a block or two.



Figure 6-10 Winter View across “the Meadow” towards Neighborhood Public Squares in South Carlyle



Figure 6-9 View of “West Side Gardens” Looking North

- Just north of Eisenhower Station Square along Swamp Fox Road is Hoffman Town Center and the multiplex theater complex and associated retail development. Further north is Hotel Square, a small green park serving as a front door for the new hotel complex, terminating the view and facilitating the needs of guests and hotel activities.
- To the west is West Side Gardens, developed as a long linear green park, providing a setting for office building development and a sense of entry to Eisenhower East from the west. This square is a long green park that provides relief to the western side of the town center and a secure setback for office development with special security needs.
- In South Carlyle, small-scale neighborhood parks, of approximately one-third and two-thirds of an acre, organize the neighborhood and terminate streets extending south from the Carlyle development, South Dulany Gardens and South Carlyle Square. South Carlyle Square is located at the end of John Carlyle Street, the new spine of the South Carlyle neighborhood. South Dulany Gardens provides a green link between the Carlyle development and the Community Park, and frames a view of the new Patent and Trademark Office atrium.



Large storefront windows for retail



A retail street with activity spilling onto the sidewalk

## Retail

Retail frontages in the Eisenhower East Plan are organized along designated retail streets. Guidelines for retail development are based upon successful retail streets in Alexandria and other locales. Wide storefronts will be kept to a minimum so that frequent changes in storefronts and their content will guarantee a lively variety of retail experiences and opportunities (See Figure 4-9 for Retail Locations.)

- The Hoffman Town Center retail center is focused at the Eisenhower Avenue Metro Station area along Eisenhower Avenue, Swamp Fox Road, and Mandeville Lane. Conceived to support the successes already in place at the Hoffman Town Center, the new project will expand the destination-entertainment character of the station area. Restaurants, hotels and other complementary development will provide retail opportunities for residents and visitors alike whether one is just visiting to see a movie, or lives in the area.
- To the east, John Carlyle Street serves the South Carlyle neighborhood with neighborhood service or convenience retail, and becomes the neighborhood main street connecting South John Carlyle Square via John Carlyle to Duke Street. John Carlyle Street is designed to be intimate in scale and will serve new residents and office workers alike.

## BUILDING HEIGHTS AND DESIGN STANDARDS

The buildings in Eisenhower East define the streets and parks by building to the edge of the street property line and developing street level uses that enhance pedestrian activity and movement. The Plan requires that streets and urban spaces create a continuous base building at the street front.

- The base building heights for Eisenhower shall range from five to eight stories. All other streets are encouraged to have a five-story base.
- That base is required to be developed at the edge of the right-of-way to define the space of the adjacent street.
- Setback requirements above the base level will establish the size and location of the building wall and control the bulk of the building so that a more articulate, modeled massing is developed above street level.

The Plan defines several zones for tower building heights that change according to specific urban conditions in Eisenhower East. Overall, the entire district will offer a varied and distinctive skyline, unique to the region yet establishing a harmonious experience for the pedestrian. Towers rise from bases filled out to the street wall, defining the pedestrian realm at street level. Above the

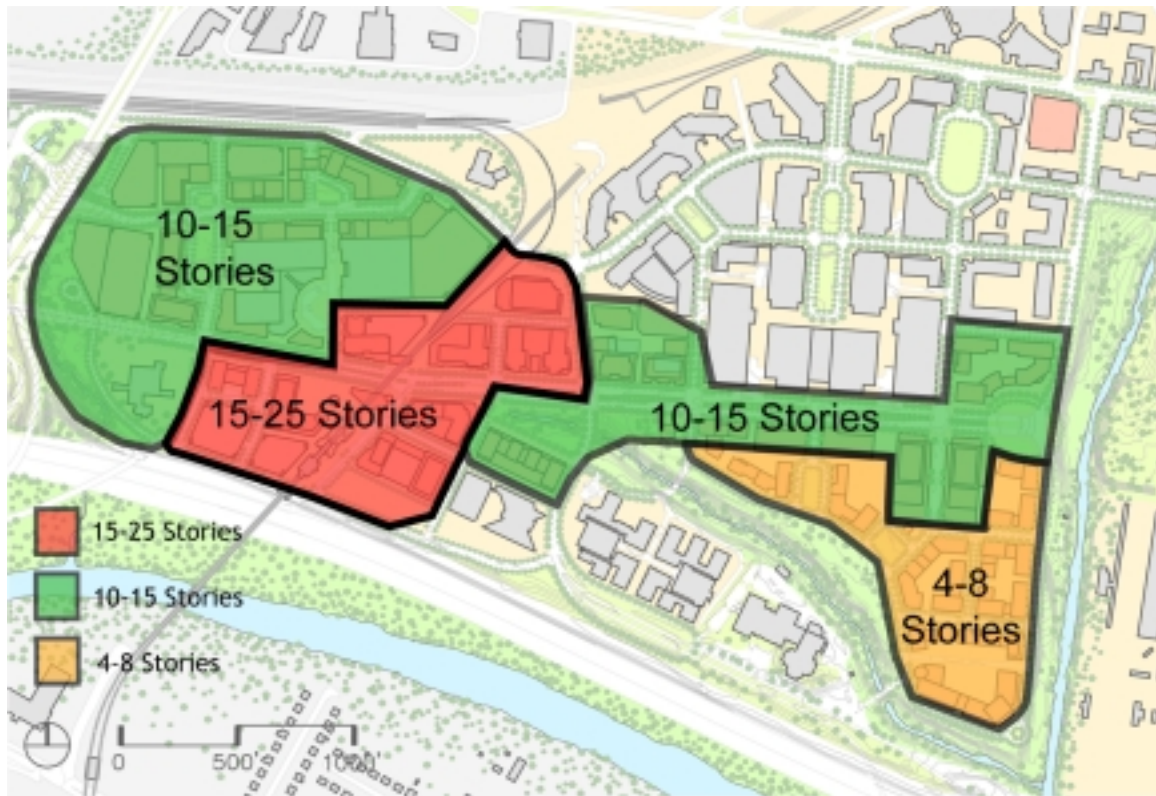


Figure 6-11 Building Heights

base, setbacks establish the mass of the street wall and permit light and air to circulate to the street below.

- Taller buildings shall be located around the Metro station area and along Eisenhower Avenue.
- Building heights will peak at the station area, with the tallest buildings approaching 250 feet high at the transit site. Heights will slope downward to the west to a range of 10 to 15 stories, while to the east will slope to four to eight stories in the Carlyle South neighborhood. (See Figure 6-11 for Building Heights.)

Building façades are required to provide depth and rich shadow articulation through a variation of surface depth, shape, and materials, overall façade organization and percentage of glass on the façade surface. Like historic Old Town, the architecture of the new district establishes a character that supports the making of the public environment and lines the street wall with facades that offer a rich visual experience to the eye. Individual buildings, while distinct, retain elements to ensure that the overall character of the district is maintained.

Architectural principles that establish a framework for design character for individual building façades are outlined in a separate section on design guidelines.

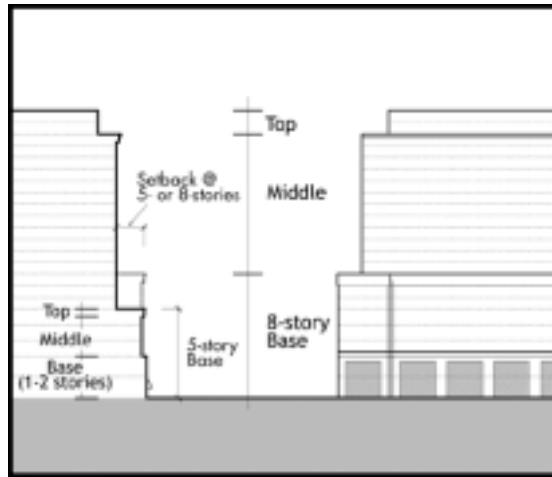


Figure 6-12 Tripartite Composition

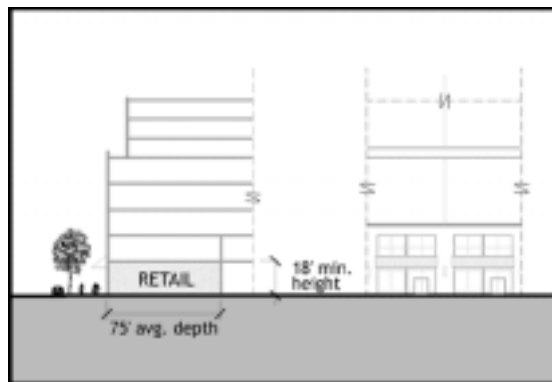


Figure 6-13 Retail Section

## Architectural Principles

The following are general architectural principles that will guide the design of new buildings within the Eisenhower East neighborhood. A complete set of design standards and guidelines will be prepared by the Department of Planning and Zoning and adopted by the Planning Commission to supplement this plan and the zoning controls. The architectural principles and the guidelines will outline the design expectations for the property owners, developers, and their architects. The design principles set standards for the design by the applicant and for review of proposals by the staff and the Design Review Board.

- 1 *Building Base.* The Eisenhower East neighborhood should be defined architecturally by buildings that create a strong and continuous urban street wall. The street wall should be common to all buildings in the district and form the “building base” that will visually support taller buildings.
  - o The base buildings should create a sense of enclosure for the street through a regular and consistent frontage along the length of the street. The Plan establishes a required build-to line (typically the property line at the street) and all buildings must be constructed up to the build-to lines. This pattern of urban development is similar to that of Old Town Alexandria.

- o The base buildings should act in concert to create the “walls” of public urban street space and urban spaces such as streets and squares. Except for important focal elements, buildings should not be “objects” surrounded by open space.
- o The base buildings should generally be of a consistent height of five stories, or roughly 60 to 65 feet—except for buildings along Eisenhower Avenue, where the building base may be up to eight stories to recognize the additional street width. Where buildings are taller than five stories, the portion of the building above five stories should be set back from the lower portion of the base and/or differentiated with an expression line or change in architecture, material, and/or color.



An example of an approximately 5-story base building

- o The buildings should be designed with a contemporary architectural expression that reflects the context of classical buildings in Alexandria. Generally, buildings should incorporate a tripartite composition of an expressed base, middle, and top. (See Figure 6-12.)
- o The base buildings should be articulated utilizing changes in plane, material, and detail to replicate the diversity and variety found in a typical Old Town commercial block. While one owner generally controls the blocks, the building should have architectural elements that emulate the rhythm of the subdivision of lots found in well-functioning cities and Old Town.
- o The base buildings should incorporate a strong base component of one to two stories, generally reflecting the location of retail spaces or spaces of interest to the pedestrian.
- o The ground floor of the base building facing the street should be visually open to provide pedestrian interest. Retail along the street provides the best opportunity for creating visual interest, along with entryways at regular intervals, show windows, and transparency to the interior of the buildings.
- o Ground floor retail should have a minimum 18-foot floor-to-floor height to accommodate quality retail space and major tenants. The retail space should have an average depth of 75 feet, and where the Plan calls for retail on the ground floor, the retail should extend more than 75 percent of the street frontage. (See Figure 6-13.)
- o The base should be capped with a strong horizontal expression element or cornice.
- o Main entries to the building should generally be located on the largest or most important street fronted by the building. By contrast, service entries and loading should be located on the smallest or least important street fronted by the building consistent with the Plan's street type designations. Parking ingress and egress and service access may not be located on the major traffic-carrying streets.
- o Parking garage exhaust vents should not open onto pedestrian ways or sidewalks along a street. Intakes for garage ventilation may be placed along exterior walls adjacent to sidewalks but they must be integrated into the design of the façade and must not negatively impact the pedestrian experience.

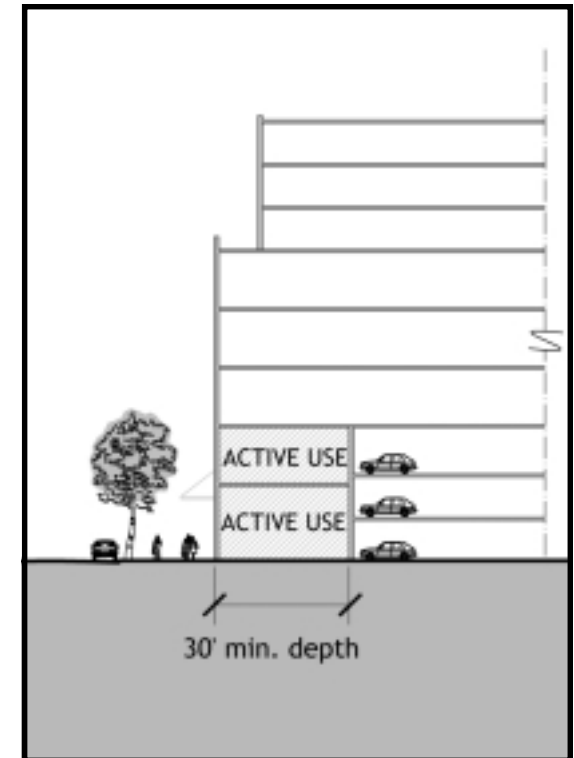


Figure 6-14 Section showing active use on street frontage; parking garage is not visible from the street

- o Where the Plan permits above-grade parking screened from the street by active uses, the active use must be a minimum of 30 feet deep. The active use should present a façade that is typical for the use. Functional windows presenting day and nighttime activity, as well as functional balconies, are strongly encouraged.
- o Where the Plan permits parking to be constructed to the street frontage, the façade should be architecturally designed to emulate the proportions and scale of the primary use. Materials should be the same as the building or similar quality. The parking should be an integral part of

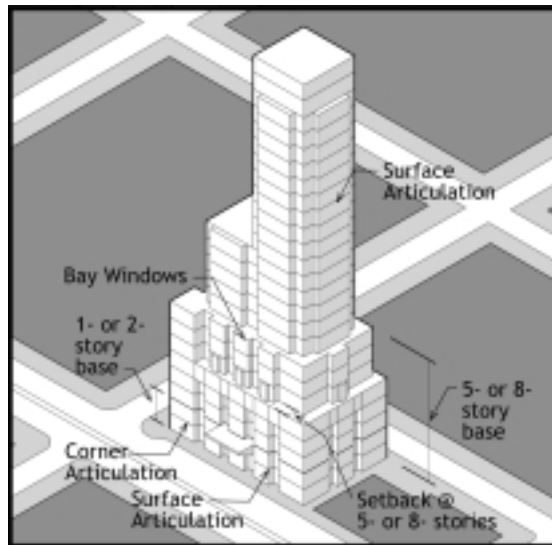


Figure 6-15 Massing of Tower Elements

the design of the primary building. Openings should be well proportioned with headers and sills. Architectural grilles are encouraged to screen openings.

- o Lighting within parking garages should be designed so that the light sources are fully screened from all public ways.
- 2 *Tower Elements.* The taller “tower elements” of the Eisenhower East buildings should be designed to the following principles that will govern their massing. (See Figure 6-15.)

- o In general, the taller high-rise building elements should be designed to create a varied skyline and to assure air and light between the towers at the street level. The placement of tower elements is intended to avoid the appearance of canyon-like streets lined with undifferentiated masses of buildings.
- o The composition of the taller buildings should consist of clearly articulated base (described above), middle, and top elements with each of the elements having an integral relationship to the others. Therefore, the tower elements should be integrated with the design of the base and avoid the impression of an unrelated building element placed on the top of a plinth-like base.



An example of a building with an articulated roofline

- o The massing of the tower elements should be developed both horizontally and vertically with changes of plane, stepbacks or setbacks, regular segmentation, and accent elements. The building articulation should avoid large, unrelieved planes and simple slab-like massing. In general, the tower elements should step back from the base; however, it may be desirable to set portions of the tower flush with the build-to line.



An example of a residential façade using high quality materials

- o The rooflines should contribute to an active skyline in the Eisenhower East district. Tower tops should be articulated to meet the sky gracefully and maintain a closely integrated relationship to the mass of the building. Mechanical penthouses should be integrated into the design, to create an articulated building top and to avoid the appearance of a small box on top of a much larger volume.

3 *Exterior Details and Materials.* The buildings in Eisenhower East should be constructed of high-quality materials and exterior treatments that draw upon and contribute to the existing context of Carlyle and the west end of Old Town.

- o The exterior skin of the buildings should be articulated with durable materials and be constructed predominantly of masonry (including stone, brick, tile, and precast concrete). Metal panels or curtain wall elements may be used as an accent but are not permitted as a primary cladding material. Synthetic materials such as plastic panels or exterior insulation finish system (EIFS) are not permitted. The building masses should be perceived as predominantly masonry and should avoid large areas of glazing. No more than 49 percent of the building's exterior should be glazed.
- o Highest quality materials should be used at the base of the building to enhance the pedestrian experience of the district, ensure durability, and contribute to the public realm.
- o Masonry should extend from the top of the building to the base with materials such as stone, cast stone, or precast concrete providing architectural accents,



Buildings defining the streetwall made of high quality materials with "heavier" material at the base

expression lines, or cornice lines. The floor slab lines should not be expressed in the exterior facade with exposed slab ends or with contrasting materials.

- o The treatment of windows in the façade should typically be punched openings and vertically-oriented instead of

horizontal window openings. Windows should have a relationship to the functions they enclose: residential buildings may have variously sized windows, some of which are operable; office buildings may have uniform fixed windows; hotels may have uniform windows with an operable portion; etc.

These guidelines are intended to ensure high quality and establish character without prescribing an exact architectural expression or form. Thoughtful solutions to design problems are encouraged in the spirit of creating the best possible public environment for Eisenhower East.

- o Windows should be glazed with clear glass to promote transparency. Darkly tinted or reflective glass should not be used.
- o Balconies should be enclosed by flanking walls with railings substantial enough to screen stored items from view. Floor slabs may not extend substantially beyond the surface of the façade or the enclosing walls.
- o The exteriors of the buildings should be developed with details such as window sills and returns, expression lines, cornices, entrance features, or bay windows that give modeling and scale to the building and minimize use of flat surfaces with no depth or visual interest.